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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SA, SA/INS, S/CT
NSC FOR E. MILLARD

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [PTER](#) [CE](#) [NO](#) [JA](#) [UN](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: Donors reaffirm support for peace process at
Tokyo conference follow-up meeting

Refs: (A) Colombo-SA/INS 9/12/03 class email

- (B) Colombo-SA/INS 9/11/03 class email
- (C) Colombo 1586, and previous

(U) Classified by Ambassador Jeffrey J. Lunstead.
Reasons 1.5 (b, d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassador participated in the follow-up meeting to the Tokyo conference held on September 12 in Colombo. Japanese Special Envoy Akashi chaired the meeting. In their remarks, donors and international agency heads reiterated their support for assistance to Sri Lanka, but underscored the need for the parties to re-engage in negotiations (see Ref A for a press statement circulated after the meeting by the Japanese). Several GSL officials spoke at the meeting, underscoring their full support for an immediate return to talks. In a separate September 15 meeting with the Ambassador, Akashi reviewed his September 14 meeting with the Tigers. Overall, the follow-up meeting was quite useful in sending out a coordinated message to the Tigers on the need to return to the talks and a message of donor support for the peace process to the Sri Lankan public. END SUMMARY.

Tokyo Follow-up Meeting

2. (C) A follow-up meeting to the June Tokyo donors conference took place in Colombo on Friday, September 12. Representatives of the governments of Norway, Japan, the EU and the U.S. (the four co-chairs of the Tokyo conference) participated in the meeting, which also included local envoys from Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. International agencies were also represented, with World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank and United Nations representatives in attendance. The GSL was represented at the meeting. Although invited, the Tamil Tigers declined to attend.

3. (C) In his remarks kicking off the meeting, Japanese Special Envoy Yasushi Akashi cited the "resounding results" of the Tokyo donors conference and noted the need for more progress by the parties in Sri Lanka. Citing the linkage between continued donor assistance and the peace process, Akashi noted that the September 12 meeting was a "concrete expression" of donor commitment to Sri Lanka. He underlined, however, the need for more progress between the two parties before substantial development assistance would be forthcoming in the north and east. In a press statement circulated after the meeting (see Ref A), the participants welcomed the "continuing commitment of both parties to the peace process and their continued efforts to resume peace talks."

GSL Remarks

4. (C) Several key Sri Lankan government officials involved in peace process issues spoke at the event. Highlights of their remarks included:

-- G.L. Peiris, Minister of Enterprise Development and chief government spokesman, noted that much of the important preliminary work on the peace process had been completed, and that Sri Lanka was now "embarking on a distinct phase," which he characterized as "challenging and daunting," but nonetheless "promising." Noting the six rounds of peace talks that took place from late 2002 through early 2003, Peiris characterized the Tokyo and Oslo Declarations as foundations to build on. He added that he was confident that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) sincerely wanted a resolution of the conflict. He went on to state that the GSL looked forward to reviewing the LTTE's counter-proposals to the government's north/east interim administration proposal

when they were ready. Divergences between the GSL's proposals and the LTTE's counter-proposals, Peiris said, were expected to be "significant," and one key aspect in reviewing the proposals would be to align the aspirations of the LTTE with established Sri Lankan law. Wrapping up, Peiris described the current situation as "propitious" for the future of the peace process, and stated that he was confident that Sri Lanka could live up to the expectations of the donors.

-- Milinda Moragoda, the Minister of Economic Reform, noted that the peace process was at a "fragile" point. He cited a need to reenergize the process and recommit resources. Moragoda said he felt that support for the peace process was waning at the present time, and cited the need to take action on implementing reconstruction projects to avoid cynicism among the public toward the process.

-- Bradman Weerakoon, the Secretary to the Prime Minister, and head of the Rehabilitation, Reconciliation and Relief Commission for the North and East, noted that there had been substantial ground activity since the June Tokyo conference, despite what he characterized as "slow" movement toward restarting the peace talks. Weerakoon cited the continuing return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) to their places of origin and continued progress on demining as two key areas in which the government had been moving forward.

-- Rauf Hakeem, the Minister of Ports and Shipping, and Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader, emphasized that Muslims still supported the peace track. That said, Muslims in the east were still being harassed and sometimes killed by the LTTE. In the meantime, Muslim IDPs were still unable to return to their points of origin in Jaffna. He urged continued international pressure on the LTTE to accept pluralism in the north and east.

The Ambassador's Remarks

15. (C) In his remarks (text provided in Ref B), Ambassador Lunstead emphasized that the U.S. strongly supported the peace process and he noted the pressing need for a resumption of negotiations. The Ambassador commented that the spate of assassinations of Tamils was deeply harmful to the process, and he called for the LTTE to publicly renounce terrorism in word and deed. The Ambassador also noted how crucial it was that the LTTE fully adhere to the rulings of the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM).

Other Remarks

16. (C) Representatives of other donor countries and international agencies made the following remarks:

-- Norwegian Ambassador Hans Brattskar reiterated Norway's commitment to third party facilitation between the GSL and the LTTE on peace process issues, and he noted the need for a common mechanism to direct aid to the north/east. Brattskar remarked that the GSL needed to take the initiative in rehabilitation and reconstruction programs. (Note: Norwegian deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgessen is due to visit Sri Lanka later this week.)

-- Miguel Bermeo, Resident Coordinator of the United Nations Development Programme, noted that the UN remained committed and fully engaged, and stated that the UNDP would maintain and increase its level of engagement. Bermeo further cited the urgent need to deliver aid to the war-torn north and east, and cited the level of commitment to human rights by the parties as a key factor for the peace process.

-- Italian Ambassador Salvatore Zotta (speaking for the EU) stressed the need for an "inclusive" peace process, that would take into consideration Tamil, Muslim, and Sinhalese civil society. He stressed the EU's strong support for Norway's facilitation efforts.

-- Asian Development Bank (ADB) country director John Cooney cited progress on the ADB-funded north-south "A9" road project. Cooney noted, however, that further ADB projects would be subject to substantial progress in the peace process.

-- IMF representative Jeremy Carter noted that Sri Lanka's economic development indices were getting more positive, but urged the GSL to be "brave on economic

reform". Carter further noted that sustainable economic development required a sustainable peace.

Akashi Meets the Tigers

17. (C) Akashi and Japanese Ambassador Otsuka briefed Ambassador and other co-chairs Sept 15 on his talks the previous day with the LTTE's Thamilmelvam. Akashi said that Thamilmelvam, in the absence of Balasingham, seemed clearly in charge and much more self-confident. At the same time, Thamilmelvam also spoke from a rigid position and appeared unable or unwilling to make any decisions himself -- in Otsuka's words, he was "His Master's Voice." Thamilmelvam said the Tigers' Interim Administration Proposal would be "tangible and pragmatic," and that the international community would be able to support it. He dismissed Akashi's contention that, with negotiations on an interim administration liable to drag on for months, the parties should agree to an ad hoc procedure to administer humanitarian assistance. On human rights ("The Tigers have not murdered anyone"), child soldiers ("What is their motivation to join the Tigers?") and on illegal camps ("The camp was there earlier and hence not illegal"), Thamilmelvam showed no flexibility.

COMMENT

18. (C) Overall, the follow-up meeting was quite useful in sending out a coordinated message to the Tigers on the need for the group to return to the peace talks. The LTTE also no doubt got the message that development assistance to the north and east would not be forthcoming if it did not re-commit itself to the process. At the same time, given the generous and favorable press coverage it received, the meeting was also important in sending out a message of donor support for the peace process. This message was an important one for the Sri Lankan public to hear. Although it still strongly supports the GSL's peace process efforts, the public is understandably worried about LTTE activities and intentions given the group's track record.

19. (C) Donors and international organizations all agreed in principle that development assistance and progress in the peace talks were linked, and that humanitarian/rehabilitation aid in the North and East should continue even though reconstruction would have to wait. Underneath, however, there are both definitional and policy issues. The Tokyo Declaration stated that the international community would "monitor and review" progress in the peace process, and that "Japan, in cooperation with the U.S. and EU, will undertake necessary consultations to establish the modalities for this purpose as early as possible." We will work with the Japanese and the EU to try to develop a structure and process to do so.

110. (C) The Akashi/Thamilmelvam meeting largely speaks for itself. What is not clear is if Thamilmelvam's rigid stance indicates that the Tigers will not negotiate at all, or if it just means that negotiations will be more difficult and protracted, with Thamilmelvam unable to take decisions himself as Balasingham did. END COMMENT.

111. (U) Minimize considered.

LUNSTEAD